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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 378th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 2 February 1998, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHAN

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Combined second and third periodic reports of Indonesia (CEDAW/C/IND/2-3, CEDAW/C/1998/I/CRP.1/Add.3) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Wibadswo and Ms. Wibisana (Indonesia) took places at the Committee table.

2. Ms. WIBISANA (Indonesia), continuing the replies to the Committee's questions in the report of the pre-session working group (CEDAW/C/1998/I/CRP.1/Add.3), said that, with regard to question 12 under article 4, her Government had consistently encouraged the private sector to allow women employees to enjoy the same maternity provisions as women in the public sector. Many large companies in the private sector had begun to apply such provisions. With regard to question 13, Government regulation No. 4/1989 stipulated that single women over the age of 18 years required permission from their parents to engage in night work and that married women needed the permission of their husbands. The intent was to protect women.

3. On question 14 in relation to article 5, she said that there had been considerable change with regard to the impact of socio-cultural values and traditions on women, although that change was very slow. Socio-cultural values as well as misinterpretation of religious teachings still reduced the impact of laws. However the Government, in particular the State Ministry for the Role of Women, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Information, had joined in advocating equality between men and women, in accordance with the Convention. Measures which had been taken to combat violations of the law were: intensification of the national discipline movement launched by the President of the Republic and enhancement of the legal apparatus; training for lawyers on the rights and status of women; administrative sanctions on civil servants who violated the principles contained in the Convention; the review and amendment of laws and regulations which were not in line with the Convention; and the organization of seminars in coordination with the law faculties of various universities.

4. On question 15, she pointed out that tables had been provided showing the number of women occupying senior positions in the press and journalism. The impact on people's outlook was not significant because the number of women occupying senior positions in the media was still limited. With regard to question 16, the legal force of the recommendation whereby men were encouraged to marry at 22 and women at 19 was embodied in instruction No. 28/1982 of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

5. In reply to question 17, she said that a few measures had been taken to reform school textbooks and other materials to remove stereotypes, namely:

formation of a cross-sectoral working group, organization of a training workshop to discuss the incorporation of gender concepts into educational curricula, and intensification of joint efforts between the State Ministry for the Role of Women and the Ministry of Education to remove stereotypes from textbooks, incorporate the concepts of gender mainstreaming and harmonious partnership, and provide guidance to teachers. As a result of intensive advocacy and training for teachers and lecturers, tasks in schools were no longer divided according to gender. Some of the obstacles encountered were the high cost of changing textbooks for millions of students and the shortage of expertise in the gender dimension in education.

6. With regard to question 18, women were being afforded many opportunities, including access to business management training, income generating activities and cooperative groups, and credit. Polyclinics were being provided for mothers and children in all villages; there were nurseries and child-care centres in the workplace and in villages; and the principle of equal pay between men and women was being enforced. On question 19, she said that 22 December was the date on which, in 1928, the first congress had been convened to unite all Indonesian women's organizations into one federation, known as the Indonesian Women's Congress. The date had therefore been declared Indonesian Women's Day; and every year the State Ministry for the Role of Women organized various activities, such as seminars, exhibitions and talk shows, at the central and regional levels.

7. With regard to question 20, statistics showed that the gap between girls and boys in school performance had been reduced drastically, particularly at the primary level, because Indonesia had introduced six years of compulsory education, in 1984, and had increased it to nine years in 1994. The gap at the high school and higher education levels had also been gradually reduced. Although there had been some improvement, the gap between boys and girls in certain scientific fields remained. Referring to question 21, she explained that, although there was no reference in the report to measures taken to prevent and combat violence against women, there was information in the supplement to the report. The measures taken included: increased publicity about the Convention so as to reach all levels of society; a recommendation that rapists and other perpetrators of violence against women and girls should be given the maximum sentence; and promotion of effective legal aid for women and children through consultations between the State Ministry for the Role of Women and the Ministry of Justice.

8. On question 22, she said that violence often occurred among women who were ignorant of their rights and obligations, as was common among women with little education who were unable to seek legal assistance to solve their problems.

9. In reply to question 23, she pointed out that "the changing concept of parenting" was reflected in the 1993 guidelines of State policy and Act No. 10/1992 on population and family welfare management, which stipulated that the education of children was a joint responsibility of parents. The policy concerning parental leave for fathers was not formally regulated, but if a child was sick one parent could take annual leave or obtain permission from the employer to be absent from work for a few days.

10. With regard to question 24 under article 6, traffic in women and young girls occurred in Indonesia, as it did elsewhere. Some sporadic studies had been conducted by non-governmental organizations, other community organizations and universities. Indonesia was affected by sex tourism, and some preventive measures had been taken by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism, Post and Telecommunications. Referring to question 25, she said that the spread of prostitution in Jakarta, Central Java, East Java and South Sumatra was associated with the rapid growth of industry and manufacturing in those areas, which attracted poor women in the vicinity to prostitution. Measures were being taken to reintegrate prostitutes into society, for example, through rehabilitation programmes. The services provided to prostitutes to prevent the transmission of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and other sexually transmitted diseases consisted of regular medical check-ups, including blood tests, and advocacy of safe sex. Many Government bodies and non-governmental organizations were actively involved in promoting safe sex and in the early detection of AIDS; and the Ministry of Health organized the screening of high-risk groups.

11. With regard to question 26 under article 7, measures taken to promote the participation of women in political decision-making included steps to increase the participation of women civil servants in senior administrative staff training; training for leaders in non-governmental organizations; and measures to increase the participation of women in cadre training in political parties.

12. Referring to question 27, she said that in the 1970s, õrganizations of wives of civil servants and military personnel had helped to increase the skills and knowledge of their members. By the mid-1980s, many such women had begun to work outside the home, and those organizations had become less active. On question 28, all political parties had women's sections.

13. With reference to question 29 under article 8, Indonesia currently had seven women ambassadors: those for New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Switzerland (Geneva and Bern). There were five women members of international organizations dealing with women's issues, four in United Nations bodies, and one in the International Council of Women. There were also a number of women working for various international organizations.

14. With regard to question 30 concerning article 9, there was no written regulation to the effect that a woman must have her husband's permission to apply for a passport. Permission was sought as a moral acknowledgement of the husband's existence. The practice was gradually diminishing, however. On question 31 under article 10, although education was not free, there were scholarships that were provided by the Government and private institutions, assistance from the national movement of foster parents, and free education for children of very poor families. With reference to question 32, the participation rate for women in adult literacy programmes was more than 57 per cent of women over 50 years old, 33 per cent of women between 30 and 49 years of age, and 10 per cent of girls and women aged between 10 and 29.

15. On question 33, the Government's policies and programmes to encourage more girls to study non-traditional subjects included advocacy campaigns calling on parents to encourage their daughters to take an interest in science and

technology and urging young girls to become more interested in those subjects; an annual science contest for members of science clubs in high schools and universities, in which an increasing number of girls were participating; and the organization by the State Ministry for the Role of Women of workshops, training and seminars to promote the study of science and technology. With regard to question 34 under article 11, she said that Government measures to protect women workers from abuse and exploitation by employers included: involvement of the State Ministry for the Role of Women and gender experts in the preparation of regulations for the implementation Act No. 25/1997 on the labour force; advocacy urging Indonesia's trade union to be more active in protecting its workers, especially women workers; advocacy encouraging members of the Association of Indonesian Entrepreneurs to be more aware of women's human rights; and raising the awareness of women workers with regard to their status and rights. Those activities had been initiated by the State Ministry for the Role of Women, in coordination with the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Justice and the Indonesian Workers' Union.

16. On question 35, the State Ministry for the Role of Women was greatly concerned about the prevailing family allowance system in State companies, and had submitted to the Ministry of Manpower a revised proposal to be included in the forthcoming Government regulation to implement Act No. 25/1997 on the labour force. The Government was reviewing 23 conventions with a view to their ratification, including Convention No. 111 of the International Labour Organization. The ratification of those conventions would be based on Indonesia's priorities. Referring to question 36, she said that measures to protect working women could have a negative effect on the hiring of women, particularly in view of the socio-cultural environment in Indonesia. However, Government measures were based on concern for the security of women who worked at night. On question 37, women who believed that their rights had been violated could have recourse to trade unions and to a legal consultation agency. Trade unions were not yet dealing with such matters on the basis of gender equality, but efforts were being made to increase their awareness in that respect. Women could have recourse to justice; and the 1945 Constitution guaranteed equality between men and women. With regard to question 38, the measures taken by the Government included the establishment of day-care clinics and family planning services in a number of Government offices, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and other ministries.

17. Referring to question 39 under article 12, she said that in order to lower maternal and infant mortality rates, the Government had provided 54,000 professional midwives at the village level, who were supported by community-based polyclinics, and had undertaken a national campaign to reduce maternal mortality. It had established mother-friendly areas and hospitals and made efforts to increase the awareness of community leaders about the seriousness of maternal mortality. For three consecutive years, national immunization week had been organized and had been effective in reaching the entire population on all the islands. Integrated health posts and community health centres had been established in each sub-district; and there were about 7,000 health centres and some 244,000 integrated health posts at the community level.

18. Referring to question 40, she said that the Indonesian authorities were aware of the role that traditional midwives could play in lowering infant and maternal mortality. Midwives were provided UNICEF kits and were given training in hygienic delivery, including the maintenance of instruments and the procedures for cleaning their hands and the delivery room. At the village level, professional midwives and traditional birth attendants were given intensive instruction on working together. Since traditional midwives were regarded as partners of medical doctors, they were always involved in programmes dealing with maternal and infant mortality. Replying to question 41, she said that men were also targeted by family planning programmes, which provided information on vasectomy and emphasized the use of condoms. A woman was required to obtain her husband's consent before making use of family planning services but it did not have to be in writing.

19. Mr. WIBADSWO (Indonesia), referring to question 42, in relation to article 13, said that there were no available data on the number of women benefiting from the Programme to Increase the Role of Women in Small Industries (P2W-IK) which, in 1993, had been converted to the Programme to Train Women Entrepreneurs. The Programme's main beneficiaries were women in small-scale businesses, women workers' cooperatives, women in farming and fishing, and female entrepreneurs and managers of joint small business groups. No precise data were available on the success rate of small and medium-sized companies run by women; however, the State Minister for the Role of Women and the Indonesian Women's Business Association (IWAPI) were collecting gender-disaggregated data for publication. Nor were data available on the number of women employed as company heads. The membership of IWAPI currently included 986 company heads in and around Jakarta and 12,669 throughout Indonesia.

20. Referring to question 43, he said that it was not feasible at the moment to increase family allowances because of budgetary constraints and current policy priorities. The Government assigned employees to field labour and other productive activities in order to increase their income and help ensure that their children would be able to complete school. With regard to question 44, everyone, not only women, must obtain a guarantee in order to apply for a bank loan. In some regions, however, a woman must present a guarantee from her husband, in keeping with his traditional role as head of the family. Replying to questions under article 14, he said that poor rural women could obtain credit at low interest rates through the Learning Groups scheme sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Family Planning Coordinating Bureau; through joint business groups, a regional government organization; and through facilities that provided credit for small-scale industries, small-scale businesses, income-generating activities and family welfare. A certificate of completion of business training, conferred by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, could serve as a guarantee for obtaining low-interest loans from a Government bank called the Indonesian People's Bank.

21. Addressing question 46, he said that the State was revising Act No. 05/1962 in order to ensure that women had an equal right to land ownership. The wives of village leaders participated in decision-making as representatives in Village Community Resilience Bodies, which were essentially rural parliaments. In that capacity, they also had access to information. Since 1984, rural women had received information through special broadcasts. Additionally, information

field officers at the village level received training on women in development and were expected to encourage rural women to participate actively in the national development process. Improved roads and transportation, the installation of electricity and clean water facilities near villages, and the introduction of applied technology, such as simple grinders, were all designed to relieve rural women of the burden of daily chores.

22. Replying to question 47 in relation to article 15, he said that, in 1985, the State Minister for the Role of Women had initiated efforts to amend the Marriage Law which were still under discussion. Amendments to the Labour Force Act had been ratified by Parliament; and the new Labour Force Act would enter into force in September 1998. Referring to the questions under article 16, he said, in relation to question 48, that, with a view to improving the situation of women in the family in particular and in public in general, the President of the Republic of Indonesia had launched the National Movement on the Harmonious Equal Partnership between Men and Women through a Gender Approach on the occasion of the sixty-seventh anniversary of Women's Day in Indonesia (22 December 1995). The State Minister for the Role of Women had determined that the Harmonious Equal Partnership should form the basis for the promotion of the role of women in national development. The Harmonious Equal Partnership was defined as a dynamic framework in which men and women had equal rights, obligations, positions, roles and opportunities, based on mutual respect and assistance and the desire to attain fulfilment. Sectoral development must be planned with a view to promoting the role of women. The Equal Partnership between Men and Women was an intermediate objective in the long-term effort to achieve a just and prosperous nation.

23. Referring to question 49, he said that the number of divorces had declined significantly from 171,545 in 1983 to 160,271 in 1984 and 83,580 in 1994. In the event of divorce, the husband paid alimony to support his former wife and children. The State encouraged the husband to pay alimony but could not take action in the event of his refusal to do so; that step must be taken by the former wife. The two spouses must appear before the judge in divorce proceedings. Special officials from the Department of Religious Affairs attempted to bring about a reconciliation between the spouses before the proceedings began. Replying to question 50, he said that the existence of women magistrates did not necessarily result in greater fairness and equality with respect to women because not all women magistrates were automatically 'gender sensitive'. With respect to question 51, monogamy was regulated under the Marriage Law No. 1/1974. Efforts to abolish polygamy included the establishment of strict regulations governing it and the denial of family allowances to the second wife. Government civil servants and members of the armed forces who practised polygamy were subject to heavy sanctions, such as the loss of rank. As a result, polygamy was rare and would gradually be eliminated.

24. In reply to question 52, he said that, in accordance with Act. No. 1/1974, a marriage must be based on mutual religion and beliefs; otherwise, it could be deemed illegal and annulled. With regard to question 53, the waiting period before a divorced woman could remarry allowed time to ensure that she was not pregnant, thereby avoiding the birth of an illegitimate child. The waiting period was prescribed by Islamic law and by Act. No. 1/1974.

25. In response to question 54, he said that the inheritance laws were governed by the Civil Code, Islamic law and customary law. The inheritance laws were the same for all communities. Although a Muslim could choose between Islamic law and customary law, the Government had just introduced a National Inheritance Law, based on jurisprudence, that applied to all citizens.

26. Ms. ACAR enquired about efforts to amend Indonesian legislation and modify social and cultural attitudes in the light of the provisions of the Convention. There was a certain incongruity between the continued existence of discriminatory legislation - for example, designating the man as the head of the family or establishing different minimum ages of marriage for men and women - and Indonesia's ratification of the Convention with virtually no reservations. There was also a contradiction between the constitutional guarantees of equality and the enforcement of Islamic law. Could Muslim women choose to be judged under civil law rather than Islamic law, or was that option given only to men? The Harmonious Equal Partnership between Men and Women seemed to reinforce rather than eliminate cultural stereotypes. She wondered whether it was consistent with article 5 of the Convention. Lastly, she wished to know whether the staff of the Government-supported women's studies centres was formally trained in women's studies and familiar with the provisions of the Convention and the concept of women's rights as human rights, as promoted by the international women's movement.

27. Ms. JAVATE de DIOS expressed understanding for the constraints that Indonesia's current economic difficulties had imposed on the delegation. The Committee was extremely concerned that the economic crisis would have an adverse impact on the lives of Indonesian women. She welcomed the active role of the State Minister for the Role of Women in promoting women's rights and women's role in development. She also welcomed the use of the Convention by the courts in settling discrimination cases, the active participation of non-governmental organizations and women's movements in providing information to the Committee, the integration of women's concerns into Indonesia's national development plans, and the establishment of a national human rights commission and expressed appreciation for the information provided on migrant women workers.

28. She wondered, however, whether the courts had to interpret the provisions of the Convention because Indonesian legislation lacked any clear definition of discrimination. Furthermore, the emphasis on women as mothers and wives might undermine their enjoyment of equal rights with men. For example, the Labour Force Act, even as amended, denied women certain entitlements, such as workers' benefits; and the provision that a woman could do night work only with her husband's permission was paternalistic. The Marriage Law, in sanctioning polygamy and unregistered marriages - which left women with no support in the event of separation - was also discriminatory. Other impediments included the requirement concerning bank loan guarantees and the restriction on land ownership by women. Such discriminatory legislation institutionalized and reinforced women's domestic role and aggravated their double burden. In that connection, she enquired about the effectiveness of the social support services referred to under question 38 and about the socialization of men with regard to the assumption of household and family responsibilities.

29. For lack of information in either the report or the oral presentations, the Committee could not analyse the patterns of violence against women in Indonesia and make recommendations on that basic obstacle to women's enjoyment of their rights in general. Outside sources had reported violence against women workers in two regions and harassment, detention and torture of women in East Timor. The extent and causes of violence against women in any context should be clarified, as should the Government's plans to obtain more systematic documentation of the problem. The specific issue of violence against women in armed conflict was meant to be understood in the light of the particular vulnerability of women in times of armed conflict and not, as the delegation had dealt with it, in terms of their service in the military. Further information was needed on that point, as well as on the availability of services for victims of domestic violence in the absence of any law against sexual harassment and battering, and on the Government's efforts to make judges, the police and other law enforcement officials more gender-sensitive.

30. The delegation had provided a good picture of the situation of women migrant workers abroad, but she wondered how the Government investigated or negotiated for better conditions in order to protect them from abuse. It was not clear if prostitution, which according to the report was pervasive, was officially tolerated and whether any preventive efforts were being made, particularly along the lines of modifying the behaviour of men. More information was needed about prostitution among migrants and about sex tourism, and how the Government was addressing the entire issue.

31. Ms. GONZALEZ, noting that there were still contradictions between the Indonesian Labour Act and the Convention, asked for clarification of the provision stating that women were to have equal rights in their capacity as women and as human resources for development, since that concept would apply equally to men. Similarly, Regulation No. 45/1990 implementing the Marriage Act (report, p. 26) should be reworded to apply equally to male spouses of civil servants. The provision in the Nationality and Citizenship Act requiring the consent of the husband for a woman to obtain a passport (report, p. 37) was demeaning and should also be amended. Furthermore, it was not clear whether men and women received the same social security benefits. National family planning programmes, which currently were aimed only at women, should focus even more on men to achieve change. The wording of article 505 of the Penal Code (report, p. 32) seemed to imply that if prostitution was not the sole means of livelihood, it would not be penalized, and she wondered if that was in fact the case. Among the further measures to encourage women to join the political process (report, p. 34), the Government should consider planning broad campaigns aimed at adolescent women to spur greater interest in political participation.

32. Ms. SHALEV observed that in two health areas - maternal mortality and anaemia - little progress seemed to have been made since the initial report of Indonesia. She was also concerned by outside reports of incidents indicating degrees of coercion when it came to the reproductive health of women: apparently the military and the police had been involved in forcing women to accept the use of intra-uterine devices. The Government claimed success in its campaigns to promote contraception, but she wondered what methods of contraception were offered to women and whether they had any choice in the matter. Requiring the husband's consent for irreversible sterilization raised

another free-choice issue; that was a private matter for the woman to decide, and the Government's position on spousal authority was in violation of the Convention. Similarly, the requirement of the consent of the husband or of family members for legal abortions to save the mother's life was a clear violation of a woman's right to reproductive health and her right to life. Furthermore, there had been reports of sexual coercion and rape by the military and the police, especially in East Timor.

33. Regarding HIV/AIDS, only limited information on its incidence in the country had been provided, and there were no sex-disaggregated data that would indicate the trend among women. The report also made no mention of HIV/AIDS education programmes for adolescents. It seemed to attribute AIDS to prostitution, yet it would be an unfair oversimplification in any society to place the responsibility on the prostitutes while absolving their male clients. The sporadic "city-cleansing projects" which had been reported and during which women had been forcibly subjected to medical examinations, would be in clear violation of the freedom with regard to reproductive health. The Government should take a serious look at the patterns and rectify such violations.

34. Ms. Yung Chung KIM said that it was to the Government's credit that it had established a State Ministry for Rural Women as early as the late 1970s, had set up 79 women's studies centres in the universities and was providing training in gender analysis for policy makers and planners. The needed changes, however, had not been as effective and rapid as they should have been. The main obstacle, recognized by the Government, were the traditional norms and culture, reinforced by the patriarchal values of the religion, which defined women as wives and mothers and men as breadwinners. Such a separation of roles was also common in northeastern Asia, where it harked back to Confucianism, but the premise was still so deeply rooted in Indonesia that all attitudes towards women seemed to stem from it. She noted that there had been no revision of textbooks and teaching materials in order not to perpetuate the stereotypes. With regard to education generally, there was a great gender discrepancy in access to education: as indicated in table 15, more than twice as many women as men had no schooling. The illiteracy rates were also 3 to 6 times higher among women, and more than twice the number of men had the opportunity for higher education. Women also were more tradition-bound in choosing their fields of study.

35. The numbers of women participating in political activities and holding leadership positions in political parties, trade unions or the media were limited. The same trends held true in employment: women generally held low-paying, unskilled jobs because of the stereotypical view that their work was only meant to add to the family income. Also, most women worked in the informal sector, beyond the protection of labour regulations. She wondered what the status was of widows and female heads of household, and what the current unemployment rate was for women. She would also like to know if the reports that certain independent non-governmental organizations had been left out of the policy preparations for Indonesia's report were accurate. In general, a clearer idea should be given of how the Government intended to reconcile the aims of the Convention with the existing norms and values in order to achieve full implementation.

36. Ms. CORTI, agreeing with Ms. Yung Chung Kim's statements in relation to article 10, said that education would have to be the starting point in overcoming the acknowledged difficulty of modernizing a patriarchal society in a multicultural and multiethnic nation. However, for the moment an elitist society was being created in Indonesia, with no educational infrastructure for the majority of the population. Education was not free, although the State apparently supported either gifted or very poor students. Such a policy seemed too selective and probably excluded more women than men; and more information should be provided on the requirements for obtaining funded education. No statistics had been supplied on illiteracy, and the bases for the educational statistics that had been given were unclear. She would like clarification about the right of ethnic groups to education, whether they were taught in their own languages and whether there were special minority schools that aimed at cultural preservation.

37. Regarding the special temporary measures to accelerate equality under article 4, it was obviously still discriminatory to require married women to get permission from their husbands to take maternity leave. There seemed to be so much discrimination in the society, and Indonesia was still very far from full implementation of the Convention. Stronger political will was needed to achieve equality for women.

38. Ms. SCHÖPP SCHILLING questioned the Government's political will to follow up on all the Committee's recommendations. The Office of the State Minister for the Role of Women had been in existence for a long time and more laws should have been amended and adopted to improve the status of women. There should be quicker action in the implementation of reforms than the Committee had seen thus far. Despite the country's current financial crisis, the Government should not stop implementing programmes to enhance the enjoyment of women's human rights; otherwise it would be failing to tap over half of its human resources potential. Moreover, the Government should ensure that the economic impact of the crisis did not affect women more than men and should take advantage of that situation to further empower women.

39. The Committee could not allow cultural characteristics and norms to undermine the principle of the universality of women's rights. Some of Indonesia's traditional values and religious principles constituted fundamental impediments to the implementation of the Convention. Indonesia should examine its traditional values in order to determine those that were core values and those that were the result of patriarchal or historical customs, separate from the real core values. She was sure that the basic core values of Indonesia were not in contradiction with human rights principles.

40. Ms. LIN Shangzhen said the fact that Indonesian women's day had been proclaimed by presidential decree testified to the role of women in that country. Indeed, the Indonesian women's commitment to their country had been amply demonstrated by the heroic role that they had played in the country's struggle for national independence. Referring to the country's current economic crisis, she expressed great concern about the overall impact of the Government's austerity policy on the Office of the State Minister for the Role of Women.

41. Mr. WIBADSWO (Indonesia) said that his delegation had taken note of all the additional questions posed by the Committee. The Government and people of Indonesia, especially women's organizations, had taken many conceptual and concrete steps in all areas in order to implement the Convention. His Government realized, however, that many problems still remained with respect to the status of women. One way to address such problems was to develop social acceptance of equal partnerships between men and women to harmonize relations between them. In order to speed up the implementation of the Convention, the President had adopted a policy of equal partnerships through the national movement. The Government, particularly the Office of the State Minister for the Role of Women, was working towards a harmonized, equal partnership between men and women. The Committee's questions that were technical in nature would be discussed by a national working group composed of representatives of various ministries, non-governmental organizations, experts and academics; and the results of those discussions would be incorporated into the next report to be submitted later on in the year. The Committee's questions would be useful inputs for Indonesia's efforts to implement the Convention.

42. The CHAIRPERSON congratulated Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, for ratifying the Convention without making reservations on substantive articles, especially article 16. While the Office of the State Minister for the Role of Women had created a conducive environment for implementing women's rights, more affirmative action policies and reforms should have been implemented, given the fact that it had been in existence for 18 years. Although the Committee welcomed the fact that the principle of equality was enshrined in the Indonesian Constitution, it wished to see the Convention being invoked in courts. Some laws designed to protect women seemed to actually reinforce the traditional stereotyped role of women; and the strong division of labour in many ways limited the impact of the Convention and created an invisible barrier for women in society.

43. She was very impressed by Indonesia's successful family planning programme and commended the Government for its adoption of temporary and special measures in the areas of education, literacy, training and maternal health. However, there were many ways of expanding the role of women, such as having more women in political decision-making positions and in business. Data regarding violence against women were also lacking. While the Government was to be congratulated for its efforts to project a more positive image of women, the most important strategy for changing society's attitudes was through gender-sensitive school curricula as well as through the media. Marriage was another area where Indonesia could improve. There seemed to be a contradiction between the official position in favour of monogamy and the fact that polygamy was still permitted. The Government should make Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population, polygamy-free. Concerning the code on inheritance, she asked whether Muslim women could in practice opt for a civil law regime under which men and women could equally inherit property. She hoped that Indonesia, the current Chairman of the Group of 77, would try to include gender issues in most of that Group's programmes.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.